

The Imperative to Decrease Palestinian Civil Society's Dependence on International Aid

Concept Paper for Dalia Association, A Palestinian Community Foundation

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“Dalia” means “grapevine” and symbolizes the potential of a small seed of hope and innovation to grow into a flourishing community initiative that provides sustenance, shelter and beauty for generations to those who nurture it.

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Concept Paper for Dalia Association, A Palestinian Community Foundation
Mobilizing Resources for Palestinian-Led Social Change and Sustainable Development

I. Context

Since the Hamas parliamentary victory in the democratic elections of January 2006, international budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) has virtually halted, and funds to civil society have been severely reduced and constrained. Israel also halted transfers of tax funds collected on behalf of the PA (International Monetary Fund 2006). The near collapse of the Palestinian economy, combined with the threat of all-out civil war, has created need and desperation of nearly indescribable proportions (see OCHA 2006 & World Bank 2006). Can aid from the international community help?

Certainly Palestinians *need* money to avert the worsening humanitarian and security crises, but what Palestinians need most from the international community isn't "aid" as we now know it. "Aid" has been discredited in the eyes of many Palestinians for being disingenuous, hypocritical and poorly implemented. Palestinians ask: Why does the international community allow Israel to deny farmers access to their land and then send food aid to unemployed farmers? Why does the international community pay millions to build the Gaza airport and innumerable roads and bridges, but do nothing when Israel destroys them? What many donors term a "neutral" stance is, in fact, subsidizing Israel's occupation and colonization.

In other words, the international community is failing to demand respect for international law and international humanitarian law, including UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 471 (1980), 605 (1987), 481 (1981), 484 (1981), 605 (1987), 681 (1990), 799 (1992), 1073 (1996), 1322 (2000), 1435 (2002) among others; various articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention (see Council for the National Interest undated), which obligate signatories comply and ensure compliance by others; and most recently, the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion finding Israel's Wall contrary to international law (International Court of Justice 2004). Therefore, many Palestinians see the international community as enablers of occupation and colonization rather than honest brokers in a process designed to lead to a just solution.

Certainly not all international actors have the same policies toward Palestinians, and governmental and nongovernmental actors must also be distinguished. Yet few have been able to transcend the dominant "post-conflict" framework that shapes nearly all interventions since the Oslo Accords. The post-conflict framework creates a façade that "development" is possible, even under active occupation and colonization. It eliminates funding for social change and resistance, thus mobilizing Palestinian civil society in service of a false promise of progress. Also, most international donors channel funds to those groups and projects that further their nations' political objectives for the region. In fact, the withholding of aid to the PA since the Hamas victory demonstrates donors' resolve to use conditional aid for their own political purposes at the expense of Palestinians' interests as they themselves define them.

So, while it is clear that international aid has kept millions alive, it has also become very clear that Palestinians' near-total dependence distorts, if not replaces, the indigenous Palestinian agenda. How? Dependence on international aid makes recipients (the PA, Palestinian NGOs, and international NGOs) accountable to the donors, not the communities they purport to serve. Development actors respond to the donors' priorities using the donors' preferred

strategies, and both the PA's and civil society's credibility with the Palestinian community has been severely compromised as a result. Since 2006, even individuals have become directly dependent on international aid, through the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), and further, families have become victim to arbitrary new banking procedures that make it very difficult to get financial remittances from relatives. How ironic that in the midst of a global movement to reduce third world debt, Palestinians are increasing dependent on international aid—a strategy that history shows will lead only to an abyss (see Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt).

Most Palestinians believe that the most important way for the international community to help Palestinians is by implementing its own rhetoric. To this end, the international community should act to implement international law and international humanitarian law and hold all parties accountable (through political, economic, cultural and other relations) to conclude a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This paper goes further to argue that until the conflict is resolved, the international community should implement aid policies that respect indigenous priorities and abilities (see Sphere Project, ALNAP and HAP International). It begins by describing the Palestinian community, which has been fragmented by Israel's colonizing policies, as well as by donor policies that treat the community in its parts rather than as a whole. Next, the paper focuses on Palestinian civil society, a sector critical to Palestinian democracy, stability and development regardless of the status of the government. The paper focuses on the distorted development of civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, because it is in these areas where physical steadfastness of the Palestinian community is essential to an ultimate just resolution of the political conflict. The paper draws on hundreds of interviews conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 with members of Palestinian civil society, activists and professionals as background to the founding of Dalia Association. These interviews explored how dependence on international aid has had unintended negative consequences on Palestinian civil society and on its ability to advance social change and sustainable development. Lastly, the paper introduces the Dalia Association, a new Palestinian community foundation that aims to mobilize resources for Palestinian-led social change and sustainable development, thus reducing dependence on conditional international aid and re-inspiring the best Palestinian traditions of communal action, positive initiative, and creative development.

II. The Palestinian Community: Fragmented by Geography, United by History

In 1948, the Palestinian population numbered approximately 1,300,000 (Sabbagh-Khoury 2004). They had remained steadfast on their land for generations—through the Turkish Ottoman occupation that was ended by European colonialism in World War I, and through the British Mandate period that essentially ended when the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jewish state was allocated 57% of the most fertile land of Mandatory Palestine (Arab League 1976) for less than one-third of the population (Government of Palestine, p. 10/p.p. 17, 23) who owned only 6.2% of the total area of Palestine (Government of Palestine, p. 30). The Arab State was allocated 43% of Mandatory Palestine for an overwhelming majority of the population (Arab League 1976).

The war of 1948 was fed by unresolved tensions growing over decades of foreign interference into Palestinian affairs and expropriation of Palestinian resources by the world Zionist movement, exacerbated by the massive influx of Jewish refugees from Europe after

the Jewish Holocaust, and sparked by the Partition Plan, which was seen by Palestinians and other Arabs as profoundly unfair.

As a result of the creation of Israel in 1948, over half of the total Palestinian population (estimated at 714,150 to 744,150) were expelled or fled and became refugees in the surrounding Arab states; these constituted approximately 80-84% of the Palestinian population that was resident on land that became Israel. The remaining 156,000 Palestinians (25-35% of whom were internally displaced) received “citizenship” in the self-proclaimed Jewish state (Sabbagh-Khoury 2004). The Palestinians in Israel were a decimated community. Between 360-429 villages were destroyed or depopulated (Fischbach 2003). The community was left devoid of its leaders, elite, and educated class (Cook 2006). They lived under military administration until 1966, during which time they were cut off from other Palestinians and Arabs and subjected to intensive repression (Sabbagh-Khoury 2004).

III. Palestinians Today

The Palestinian community has grown since 1948 to approximately 9.5 million worldwide (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics November 2005). It is fragmented into distinct areas, which are further subdivided by their distinct historical experiences of colonization, occupation and resistance. In Israel, there are approximately 1.2 million Palestinian citizens (nearly 20% of the population of Israel) living in three main areas—The Galilee in the north, the Triangle in the centre of the country, and the Naqab in the south. Approximately 29% live in ten Arab “cities,” 55% in more than 100 Arab villages, 8% in six mixed Jewish-Arab cities, and 8% in over 40 unrecognized villages (Mada undated). About 276,000 are classified as internally displaced (CIA undated) meaning that they left or were expelled from their original villages during/after the 1948 war and although they remain in the country, they have never been allowed to return to their original villages, which in most cases have since been destroyed or Judaized. Although they hold Israeli citizenship, the Palestinians inside Israel face structural discrimination as a result of being non-Jews in a self-defined Jewish state. They are also severely restricted from normal social and economic interaction with Palestinians in the occupied territory and cut off from most of the Arab world (Cook 2006).

Palestinians citizens of Israel receive substantially less than their fair share of municipal budget allocations, have much higher unemployment rates than Jewish citizens, and experience higher poverty—particularly in the 46 Bedouin villages that Israel refuses to recognize (Kamm 2003). There is systematic, legalized discrimination in all aspects of the social, economic, political system of Israel (Cook 2006, National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel 2006, Kamm 2003). Inside Israel, Palestinians’ dominant call is for a “state for all its citizens,” a demand which the Israeli establishment equates with the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state, and therefore, sedition (Cook 2006) or treason.

In the Palestinian territory that was occupied in 1967, there are 3 distinct areas:

1. The West Bank, with a projected Palestinian population of 2,372,216 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics July 2005), has been further subdivided by Israel’s “closure regime,” which includes closures, curfews, permanent and flying checkpoints, other physical obstacles, and the Wall—all of which chop up Palestinian territory into cantons and ghettos, inaccessible to one other and with varying levels of accessibility to labour and goods markets, health and education facilities, and other

basic services (OCHA Barrier Reports various dates, World Bank 2004 and World Bank Technical Team 2006).

Approximately 60% of the Palestinians in the West Bank live in 615 rural villages. Rural areas suffer from proximity to settlements (and resulting settler attacks on people and property), checkpoints, and lack of access to jobs in Israel or Palestinian cities. Villages suffer from underdeveloped infrastructure. They lack sewage systems, reliable electricity, etc. In the West Bank, there are an estimated 670,030 Palestinian refugees (Salem 2005), most of whom live in overcrowded UNRWA camps with poor water access and sanitary infrastructure, and only limited basic social services.

2. East Jerusalem—with an estimated population of between 168,000 Palestinians (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics July 2005) and 238,000 Palestinians (US Department of State 2005)—is part of the West Bank according to international law. East Jerusalem remains a major religious, cultural and economic centre for Palestinians, despite Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem through a series of laws and acts of expropriation and expulsion starting in 1967. Most Palestinian residents of Jerusalem do not enjoy Israeli citizenship, they only have "residency" and access to some municipal benefits, and these "rights" are under constant threat. Active building of the Wall, illegal settlements, demolition of homes, denial of building and working permits, discriminatory taxation (European Union 2004) combined with an intensive campaign to revoke residency rights of Palestinians (see B'tselem) makes life in Jerusalem increasingly stressful and expensive.
3. The Gaza Strip, with a projected population of 1,389,789 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics July 2005), including approximately 910,194 refugees (Salem 2005) is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. Gaza is virtually closed since Israel's "disengagement" in August 2005 (Gisha 2007). In August 2006, Israel's extensive bombing campaign damaged much of Gaza's infrastructure, knocking out electricity, access to water, bridges and roads. The entry into and exit out of Gaza for work, to access health care, or to move goods is extremely restricted (World Bank Technical Team 2006), exacerbating unemployment, poverty, food insecurity (FAO and WFP 2007 forthcoming), and socio-emotional problems.

Occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, the occupied territory is newly characterized by poverty, violence and underdevelopment. The 59-year-long deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian conflict has kept generations of Palestinians without resolution to their claims for statehood, self-determination, and basic human and civil rights. Since 2000, the prolonged state of "transition" (presumably to peace) has been replaced by deterioration on nearly all fronts, including reoccupation and regular incursions and attacks since 2002. Further, since the international community cut-off all budgetary support for the Palestinian Authority in reaction to the Hamas victory in the January 2006 parliamentary elections, government employees (approximately 165,000 who are each responsible for sustaining 7-10 others according to OCHA) have not been paid full salaries; most have received no salary at all. Important challenges facing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza now are: lack of a functioning governing authority (and the continued incarceration of many elected parliamentarians), spreading poverty, unemployment, lack of rule of law, inaccessibility of quality health care, loss of land and land rights, increasingly restricted mobility, displacement, economic stagnation, escalating mental and emotional illness, destruction of infrastructure, high rates of incarceration, expropriation of Jerusalem and expulsion of its

residents, and constant physical and psychological violence. Recently, intercommunal violence has increased and a civil war appears possible.

Outside of historic Palestine, there are an estimated 2,839,639 Palestinians in Jordan, an estimated 442,699 in Syria, and an estimated 421,292 in Lebanon (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics November 2005)—most of whom are refugees living in 32 registered refugee camps (UNRWA undated). Elsewhere in the Arab World there are an estimated 667,055 Palestinians (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics November 2005); and elsewhere in the Diaspora there are an estimated 542,708 Palestinians, more than half of whom are in the United States (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics November 2005). Palestinians in the Diaspora live in a wide range of circumstances: some hold foreign citizenship and enjoy a high standard of living while many others have no legal status and live without any protections. The Palestinian Diaspora continues to organize around its Right of Return, which is guaranteed in international law (UNGA 194 of 11 December 1948).

IV. Palestinian Civil Society Inside Israel

For decades, repressive measures succeeded in instilling fear and coercing obedience from among Palestinian citizens who, in any case, had been stripped of their political and other leaders (Cook 2006). However, after the lifting of military rule in 1966, several changes led to the rapid organization of Palestinian civil society. These changes included the emergence of student and community-based nationalist activities and increased interaction with Palestinians in the occupied territory, deepening identity and political resolve. Further, there was a deepening of discontent because of massive confiscation of Palestinian farmland. During the general strike in protest of the confiscations, the Israeli authorities shot dead 6 unarmed protesters in the village of Sakhnin, dozens were arrested and hundreds injured. Now known as Land Day, it marks a turning point in the development of Palestinian political consciousness inside Israel (Cook 2006).

Slowly, Jewish Israeli civil society developed some independence and was no longer in strict service to the state-building project (Payes 2003). It was not until 1980, however, that Israel first passed a Law of Associations with the intent of legalizing and regulating civil society activity. Since then, over 1,000 NGOs have been registered by Palestinian citizens of Israel representing about 4% of the over 20,000 NGOs in Israel (Payes 2003). Not surprisingly, Palestinian citizens' NGOs have a very different relationship to the state than Jewish NGOs. Unlike Jewish NGOs, they tend to do advocacy rather than service. When they do provide services, they are alternative services, which have been denied to their community by the state, whereas Jewish NGOs often provide services as subcontractors to the state. Further, a majority of Jewish NGOs receive funding and other benefits from the state, as in many industrialized countries. Palestinian NGOs function more like developing-world NGOs. They are funded by external donors and challenge the state in various ways. Most importantly, Palestinian NGOs in Israel experience restrictive and discriminating laws, which include "...opening more investigations and closing more Palestinian than Jewish NGOs in Israel; use of the Emergency Regulations to close Palestinian-Israeli NGOs; threats to fire civil servants who volunteer in Palestinian-Israeli NGOs; warning investigations of activists; blatant discrimination on the level of governmental funding of Palestinian-Israeli NGOs in comparison to their Jewish counterparts; and discrimination in giving tax benefits" (Payes, 2003 pp. 84-85).

The massacres at Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon in 1982 and the outbreak of the first *Intifada* in 1987 were occasions for transformation within the Palestinian minority in Israel, who increasingly contextualized their struggle within the broader Palestinian struggle. However, the Oslo Accords, which did not even mention the future of the Palestinian minority in Israel, made clear that Palestinian citizens of Israel would have to fight for their own future within Israel. The Oslo Accords were occasion for Palestinians in Israel to rededicate themselves to the unique challenge facing them—finding justice and equality inside a state declared for Jews.

Palestinians in Israel continued to identify with and support the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territory, and in October 2000, non-violent protests broke out in reaction to Israel's response to the second *Intifada*. Thirteen (13) unarmed Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed, and an inquiry held some years later found no one responsible. Israel's contradictory dual discourse that frames Palestinian citizens of Israel as "Israeli Arabs" distinct from Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and also frames Palestinian citizens as a "fifth column" trying to destroy Israel from inside under the direction of outside Palestinian forces (Cook 2006), creates a complex environment in which the Palestinian minority has tried to develop civil society. Palestinian NGOs in Israel try, on the one hand, to function within the legal boundaries defined by the state, while at the same time challenging the state as an ethnocracy that is inherently undemocratic (National Committee for the Heads of Arab Local Authorities in Israel 2006, Arab Association for Human Rights undated).

In other societies, civil society activities spread across a range of sectors and institutions, including academia, culture, labour, etc. However, since nearly all institutions in Israel are dominated by Jews and Zionist ideology, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) have become the rare, valuable space in which Palestinian citizens of Israel may formulate their own needs and solutions, build their own community and capacity, and interact on their own terms. Further, Palestinian NGOs try to address the immediate needs of the community, which including land and housing, economic development and education, while also maintaining focus on the larger issues of survival and recognition as a national minority. This makes NGOs and CBOs absolutely critical to the advancement of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Most recently, two prominent efforts have been made to put the issue of Palestinian citizens' rights on the top of the Israeli national agenda. The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel published *The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel* in 2006, and Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel published *The Democratic Constitution, draft*, in February 2007. These efforts, and an anticipated document from Mada: Arab Center for Applied Social Research in Haifa, result from intensified, collective advocacy on the part of the Palestinian citizens of Israel that reflects the community's realization that their future lies in renegotiating their collective status in Israel, not in the outcome of negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

V. Civil Society in the Occupied Territory

Unlike in Israel, civil society organizations in various forms (religious & secular, formal & informal) have long been the bedrock of society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially since the 1967 Israeli occupation and through the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the mid-1990s. Usually run by volunteers, they are widely credited for providing the structure and services needed for Palestinians to stay on their land and survive under the

harsh realities of military occupation. They provided health care, education, humanitarian relief, business assistance, human rights advocacy, and international connections. NGOs and CBOs usually were (and often still are) run by politically-motivated social movements. They did much of the work a government normally does, plus enabling broad citizen participation in community life. Certainly there were problems, like factional tension, however, there were also major accomplishments, like the inclusion of women and youth in civic life. Until the establishment of the PA, all social change and development work was done by indigenous Palestinian organizations, which enjoyed the support of the PLO, Palestinian Diaspora, the Arab World, and a small number of ideologically-oriented Western donors (Development Studies Programme 2005 and 2000); but Palestinians did not receive “development” aid.

Ironically, international recognition of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) by the Oslo process had the result of undermining support for and funding to social movements and their grassroots initiatives. The PLO diverted much of its support from social movements to the PA, and the international community and the Arab World supported the emerging governmental role of the PA by funding it at the expense of community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs. For example, after Oslo, NGOs received only 8% of international aid with 87% going to the public sector and 5% to UNRWA (MAS 2005).

International aid disbursements to the occupied Palestinian territory skyrocketed, totalling about US \$7.5 billion over the 1994-2004 period—an average of US\$250 per capita annually (MAS 2005)—as many governments used aid as a foreign policy tool to promote stability in the region. Not surprisingly, the PA assumed responsibility for many social welfare activities despite the fact that some CBOs and NGOs had longer experience and more qualifications. Some social movement efforts have been co-opted by the PA while others have reconstituted themselves as NGOs in order to benefit from donor funding, thereby increasing competition and reducing cooperation within civil society. Competition for donor funds between the PA and NGOs and among NGOs further distracted both from their obligation to remain accountable to the Palestinian grassroots.

As mentioned earlier, the Oslo process inappropriately imposed a “post-conflict” framework on Palestinian society. Many bought into the distortion that Palestinians should stop focusing on Israel and focus instead on building their own society within the Oslo framework. The new paradigm seeped insidiously into civil society activities. “Development” and “capacity-building” replaced resistance and even “advocacy” was redirected away from demands for an end to occupation to demands for accountability by the PA. Activities that were popular with donors, like democracy or non-violence training, remedial education, youth leadership, women’s empowerment, microenterprise, etc. were of questionable value to a population with severely constrained influence over their own present and future, yet these activities proliferated. The huge development industry in the occupied territory seemed to ignore the EU’s own observation that “No humanitarian aid programme can succeed while serious and systematic breaches of international humanitarian law continue generating the harm and distress that the aid seeks to relieve” (Diakonia 2005).

Moreover, after the second *Intifada* in 2000, funding was shifted “...towards emergency aid, job creation and budget support at the expense of long-term development activities (MAS 2005). The ratio of development aid to emergency aid was 7:1 before the *Intifada* and shifted to 1:5 in 2002 (Alpher 2005, p. 155). This has pushed Palestinian organizations further into a kind of subcontractor role as relief providers and away from their role as leaders of indigenous Palestinian development. Further, many civil society organizations, increasingly

dependent on international aid, lost their grassroots connections and political independence thus undermining their democratic content.

Then, in 2001, the 9/11 attacks in the United States triggered a barrage of still-unfolding implications for Palestinian civil society, NGOs and donors. Large amounts of aid were frozen or heavily restricted. Palestinian organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory mounted a boycott against the US-led anti-terrorist certification procedures, but participation has eroded as NGOs face increasing pressure to sign offensive documents rather than forgo funding. Despite some efforts by grantmakers in the global north and philanthropic advocacy groups to protest the measures (Grantmakers without Borders 2006), the general atmosphere of the US “war on terrorism” affects nearly all aspects of funding for NGOs in the occupied territory.

Also, the increasing preference of governmental and non-governmental donors to use international NGOs (INGOs) to implement or oversee development activities is also notable in the occupied Palestinian territory as it is elsewhere in the developing world. More aid is channelled through INGOs, making it harder for national NGOs to get funds, and CBOs and informal grassroots organizations find it nearly impossible to get funds without the sponsorship of an intermediary NGO with international connections. Many INGOs are also taking more active roles in project implementation of activities, in part due to the increased attention to accountability. The effectiveness of national-international NGO partnerships varies depending on levels of respect for local leadership, length and depth of the INGO’s commitment to Palestinian development, bureaucratic requirements that either support or facilitate national NGO institutional capacity, and other factors. Even in the best of circumstances, the increasing role of INGOs has the negative consequence of marginalizing Palestinian civil society in the development arena.

In sum, through 2005, with the PA established as the gateway for funding to the Palestinian people, funds that used to flow through the PLO to social movements and civil society dried up, leaving civil society dependent on the same politically-motivated international funds as the PA. So:

- Political factions no longer supported civil society organizations as they once did. Civil society learned to raise funds through highly-structured, restrictive “development” programs that enable foreign governments to control what projects are implemented, how and by whom. Critics argue that they actually undermine long-term sustainable development by subsidizing destructive acts of the Israeli military, inhibiting the development of local agendas and leadership, recycling funds back to donor countries, and siphoning off aid funds to the Israeli economy.
- Because international donors only funded registered NGOs, many civil society actors reconstituted themselves as NGOs in order to get development money. The breadth, depth and diversity of civil society was eroded; protective and competitive impulses divided civil society; and small, informal grassroots efforts were disabled from getting funding.
- Disjoined from social movements, large NGOs were increasingly “professional” in outlook, operating in a new mode based on clientism. Some say this professionalization is a kind of westernization that divorces them from grassroots connections thus, in some cases, making them less representative of and responsive to

their own people. Critics argue that NGOs formed an industry with a highly-paid elite competing with other sectors of society for staff and constituency.

- Coordination among NGOs varied in scope and depth. The factionalized system had similar services provided by each faction, but everyone knew what everyone else was doing. However, during the Oslo period, there was tremendous duplication and no “market” (i.e. community demand or involvement) to regulate the number of NGOs or what they did.
- While some consider Palestine’s NGO law as “the best in the Arab world,” others say it is underdeveloped and unevenly applied resulting in tensions (both productive and unproductive) between the PA and civil society.

Thus it was not only the international boycott that started in 2006 that threatened Palestinian civil society, but rather the Oslo Accords and all their implications. It seems that for every two steps forward, Palestinian civil society’s struggle for independence and accountability to the grassroots was pushed three steps back.

VI. The Impact of International Aid on Palestinian Civil Society in Israel and the Occupied Territory

Given the weakness of the Israeli and Palestinian governments and their inability to reach a just and conclusive agreement, the importance of civil society is greater than ever. In Israel, Palestinian civil society provides Palestinian citizens at large with the reference point that it lacks from the Israeli government. Civil society monitors Palestinian citizens’ rights and needs and takes action to mobilize the community to hold the Israeli government accountable. In the occupied Palestinian territory, civil society is needed to provide services and encourage citizenship until the PA has the infrastructure and capacity to play its central role. Once the PA is functioning effectively, civil society will play an equally critical role activating citizens to ensure PA transparency, accountability, and democracy.

International aid has had contradictory affects on the development of Palestinian civil society. In Israel, external aid has often been the only source of funds for organizations, activities or activists that seek to challenge Israel in fundamental ways. At the same time, this aid is severely constrained in at least three ways. First, most governments categorize Israel as an industrialized democracy and therefore ineligible for development aid. This ineligibility extends to Palestinian citizens, despite the fact that they face hardships that are, in many ways, similar to those in the third world and other regions of conflict. However, most international donors are unwilling to treat the Palestinian minority as a group with needs separate from those of the state, making it very hard for Palestinian NGOs and CBOs to raise international funds in significant amounts (Kamm 2003). Second, most of the international funds delivered to Israel are managed by Jewish interests or Christian interests—either overseas at the point of contribution or locally at the point of disbursement. This fact over-empowers certain gatekeepers in those communities who have their own political interests they wish to support. Third, with the notable exception of the Welfare Association—a private Palestinian foundation based in Geneva—there is very little money flowing from Diaspora Palestinians or the Arab world to Palestinian civil society inside Israel. This seems to be a result of complex factors including the Arab boycott of Israel, lack of contacts between Palestinians inside Israel and Arab funders, fear and mistrust on both sides, fear of Israeli reprisals, and perhaps lack of mechanisms for the transfer of funds.

In addition, the Oslo framework, which contextualizes all western discussions of Israeli and Palestinian issues, has rendered Palestinian citizens of Israel invisible. They define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as between Israeli Jews and Palestinians in the occupied territory. Thus, many donors only fund Palestinian citizens' activities when they promote "coexistence." This includes cooperative activities intended to normalize relations between Jewish and Palestinian citizens, or it includes efforts to improve Israel cosmetically (i.e. challenge racism in Israel but not challenge Israel as a racist state). There seems to be no space within Oslo-dominated thinking for the needs and rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel on their own terms. For example Palestinian citizens of Israel are struggling for their survival and recognition as a national minority, they are struggling for fundamental equality in state treatment, and they face urgent attacks in the area of land and housing, employment and economic development, and education. Despite the importance of these issues, many donors shy away from funding activities that could appear to challenge Israel.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, international aid deserves credit for protecting the PA for many years from certain collapse under the weight of its unrealistic obligations, and clearly, international aid is responsible for providing food, services and jobs for millions. On the other hand, the cumulative role of international aid (and especially dependence on international aid) is undermining democracy, independence, social change and sustainable development.

Also, we now know that most international aid is unreliable. After democratic elections in January 2006 resulted in a Hamas majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council, nearly all international aid was withdrawn, restricted, or redirected. The impressive aid infrastructure built by the development community in the occupied territory has been left to waste away; coordination between donors and the PA and among donors is severely lacking. Ironically, recent studies suggest that in 2006, total aid disbursed to the occupied Palestinian territory actually increased over the 2005 level (FAO and WFP 2007 forthcoming), but this aid was not intended for development nor did it result in development.

In sum, dependence on international aid has had devastating distorting consequences for Palestinian civil society in both Israel and the occupied territory, including:

- donor-driven agendas as NGOs are forced to chase money through whatever calls for proposals are posted, rather than engage in the serious consensus building and strategic thinking required to develop indigenous civil society agendas.
- organizational insecurity due to the fact that donors prohibit any saving of resources from project funds, which leaves NGOs surviving project to project, unable to pay staff in between-project periods, and unable to plan responsibly for organizational growth and sustainability.
- layers of bureaucracy imposed by INGO intermediary organizations and donors, not limited to requirements for financial reporting that burden organizational systems; complex and unfunded project design processes; and deadlines that do not take local conditions into account.
- expenditure of organizational resources on donor relations at the expense of program work, including payment for fundraising consultants; hiring of bilingual staff even

when monolingual Arabic-speaking staff may be more qualified; and time-consuming hosting of donor delegations.

- susceptibility to morally offensive conditions on grantees, particularly certain versions of anti-terrorist certification that require signatories to be investigators and enforcers of US or other foreign policy.
- limited access to funding for overhead and operating expenses, combined with accounting rules that make it extremely difficult to fund administrative staff like the executive director and non-project related processes such as strategic planning and staff training.
- extremely limited flexibility to change program plans once approved, even when new information or changed circumstances prove the need.
- procurement rules that require aid money to be spent in donors' countries rather than in support of the local Palestinian economy, not to mention the substantial gains to Israeli intermediaries at the expense of the Palestinian private sector.
- fraudulent practice, including inflation of budgets to qualify for large grants; back-dating of contracts and payments to retroactively comply with unrealistic rules; and exaggerated claims about outputs and impact in order to satisfy unrealistic donor expectations.
- arbitrary limits on the amount of funding available, which force NGOs to conceptualize projects within the budgetary restrictions imposed by donors (often larger amounts of money than necessary).
- disadvantage to those with a lack of competence in fundraising, exacerbated by the fact that most proposals, monitoring reports and evaluation must be submitted in English.
- destructive competition for funds, leading NGOs to work in isolation from one another, undermining efficiency, wasting resources, and minimizing impact.
- waste of intelligence and competence that comes from diverting the efforts of the highest potential Palestinian civil society actors to the task of attracting and satisfying donors rather than working for social change and sustainable development. And,
- a general sense of frustration about the extent of international interference in Palestinian development that exacerbates Palestinians' existing resentment that the international community is not pressuring Israel to end the occupation but rather is using the excuses of "neutrality" or "humanitarianism" to enable the hopeless and dehumanizing status quo.

The primary problem with international aid, then, is that ignores Palestinian reality—it ignores the context of occupation and colonization. The "post-conflict" framework imposed on Palestinians since Oslo is a façade. There can be no sustainable development under occupation and colonization. The international community's failure to admit this publicly is akin to pretending that the naked emperor is wearing clothes. Instead, rational, effective

international actors should treat Israel and Palestinians in accordance with international law established to end the conflict justly and conclusively, and to deliver aid in the meantime with this aim in mind.

Moreover, aid should be responsive to Palestinians' priorities and abilities. In fact, in accordance with most donors' stated objectives and all international development best practice standards, Palestinians should be not only dependent "partners" but true leaders in their own efforts for peace with justice and sustainable development. Unfortunately, this is far from the current reality.

VII. Palestinian Complicity

In truth, many Palestinians are complicit in these undermining processes. "Development" work in Israel can be lucrative, and in the occupied Palestinian territory, development work is far more lucrative than government work, academia or even the private sector. Hundreds of NGOs (some legitimate, some not) have been registered in order to qualify for money available from international donors. In fact, after the Hamas legislative victory, innumerable Fatah-affiliated NGOs were established and quickly funded by donors seeking to empower the opposition. Further, there are no mechanisms to credibly facilitate cooperation, avoid duplication, share best practices, or enforce standards. In this environment, donors have come to rely heavily on a few, well-known, westernized, English-speaking, professional NGO leaders for their ideas and recommendations, and thus a new Palestinian elite has been empowered (Hanafi and Tabar 2005).

The channelling of an overabundance of money through a small number of Palestinian gatekeepers has enabled their NGOs to grow in size and influence furthering their monopolizing powers. Despite what may be good intentions, they have been accused of using their influence over money and international connections for their own benefit or to advance their own conceptualization of social benefit. Some of them have bought into the idea that community-based organizations (CBOs) don't have the capacity for political and social analysis and that only they themselves can conceptualize Palestinians' needs. Donor representatives regularly rely on these elites for political analysis and their evaluation of others' capacity and relevance. Through the exchange between donors and these Palestinian elites, certain frameworks are agreed upon that have a powerful influence on development dynamics, though the majority is neither consulted nor considered (Hanafi & Tabar 2005).

Equally important, the Palestinian NGO elites tend to stay in their positions of power for extended periods, and intentionally or not, obstruct the development of a new, younger group of organizational and social leaders. Even board members—legally obliged to oversee NGOs—are weak in the face of the power of some executive directors. Lastly, many Palestinians' inability or unwillingness to work together across lines of ideological or personal difference has hindered civil society from speaking with one voice to donors and using their combined influence to negotiate for the advancement of an indigenous Palestinian development agenda. Even worse, some say these elites give credibility to an unjust international aid system.

VIII. Dalia: An Indigenous Initiative

It is often said that Palestinians have few alternatives to dependence on international aid. Is it true that the Palestinian economy is simply too weak to support local fundraising? Is there not a strong tradition among Palestinians of helping one another? Of pooling resources for

collective use? Of stewarding resources—olive trees, mosques, public land, etc.—for the benefit of current and future generations? Isn't that, in fact, how Palestinians have survived as a people through decades and decades of colonization, occupation, dispossession, expulsion, and indignity?

While international aid is badly needed and may be an inescapable part of the Palestinian landscape for the foreseeable future, Palestinians cannot let it define or control them. To this end, we have established the Dalia Association—the first and only Palestinian community foundation.¹ Dalia is a community-based organization dedicated to mobilizing resources (especially local and Diaspora resources), facilitating community-based decision-making about the use of resources, and promoting broad community participation in Palestinian initiatives for social change and sustainable development.

Dalia works from a new, empowering, indigenous paradigm that opens possibilities for social change and sustainable development that don't currently exist:

- *Dalia treats Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza as a unified Palestinian community* with strong ties to the Diaspora. Others have separate approaches for each geographically-defined community. However, by taking a holistic view (while still recognizing diverse needs within the whole) Dalia will expose untapped potential for mutual self-help. For example, Palestinian women in villages in Israel might learn from the extensive women's microenterprise movement in the West Bank. Palestinian students in Gaza might benefit from academic resources accessible through Palestinian students in Israel.
- *Dalia makes local fundraising a priority.* While individual Palestinians may be poor, as a community of nearly ten million worldwide, we are rich in resources. Colonization, occupation, dispossession and expulsion have demoralized the community, but Dalia can help coordinate and bring focus to efforts to support those in the homeland. If each one puts in a dollar, ten or a thousand, we will all be donors and we will all be beneficiaries.
- *Dalia takes an innovative approach to "development."* Rather than focus on activities and outcomes, Dalia is more concerned with the process of community-based decision-making. We believe that people know their own needs and how best to address them in the most direct, dignified and cost-effective ways. In practical terms, this means not imposing a fixed idea of how change should happen but rather staying open to offering capacity building, income-generation projects, networking, project grants, core funding, technical assistance, individual fellowships, private sector loans, competitions, etc., thus maximizing the transformational potential of even a small amount of money.
- *Dalia has made advocacy for better use of badly needed international funds a core objective*, thus trying to influence the system within which Palestinian civil society raises money. In practical terms, this means advocating with INGOs, governmental donors and grantmakers to raise awareness about the impact of donor policies and procedures on Palestinians. In the future, we hope to establish a US 501(c)(3) in order

¹ Dalia Association (asbl) was registered on 3 January 2007 under Belgium law because the PA had halted registration of new NGOs.

to provide fiscal sponsorship and expenditure responsibility for Palestinian projects, thus opening up a funding channel that has been nearly closed by US anti-terrorist policies.

- *Dalia will use a professionally invested permanent endowment as a core strategy* that will ensure sustainable income for generations. Dalia will promote the strategy further by encouraging local NGOs to build dedicated organizational endowments under Dalia's management thus enlarging the funds under our management while also offering a valuable service to NGOs.
- *Dalia will actively work in partnership locally and internationally*, learning from the experiences of other third world community foundations and international best practices, and sharing our experiences on the cutting edge of philanthropy, social change and development with our local and international allies.

As an endowed community foundation, Dalia will provide an independent, sustainable source of funds with transparent and accountable mechanisms for local control and a vibrant community organization in which Palestinians can themselves be donors and implementers of their own social change and sustainable development agenda. Further, we believe that by humanizing and empowering Palestinians in the development process and respecting them as authors of their own lives, it will fundamentally shift power relations between the Palestinian grassroots and NGOs and between Palestinian society as a whole and the aid sector. In other words, through Dalia, we hope to help shape a dynamic and relevant civil society that is accountable to the people.

We also hope to develop new traditions of secular philanthropy and social responsibility alongside Islamic and Christian giving. We hope to re-inspire volunteerism not driven by factional politics. We hope to inspire people's hope and trust in self-initiative. We will do this by:

Mobilizing resources (money, volunteerism, technical assistance, ideas, creativity, networks....) to build a thriving civil society. A professionally invested permanent endowment, built over time, will ensure sustainable income for current and future generations.

Distributing resources through community-based grantmaking and other creative mechanisms that put decision-making in the hands of the people.

Involving people of all backgrounds & orientations in contributing, volunteering and working together toward shared goals, thus helping to strengthen the Palestinian social fabric.

Advocating for a new aid system, policies and procedures that respect Palestinian rights, Palestinian agendas, and local priorities.

Of course, many non-trivial challenges will have to be addressed: 1) how to recruit a board of directors that truly reflects the political, regional, socio-economic, religious, age, and gender diversity of Palestinian society; 2) how to ensure transparent, participatory, decision-making that serves community interests and not those of a particular group; and 3) how to raise such a large amount of money. But these and other challenges can be overcome. Community

philanthropic organizations are succeeding all over the global south—in the Philippines, in Kenya, in Nicaragua, in Nepal, and elsewhere. Why not for Palestinians?

In our extensive community consultations, Palestinians, donors and others articulated the following challenges, to which we put forth our initial responses below:

Challenges Raised by Various Stakeholders	Initial Responses
<p>“The Palestinian Authority is near financial collapse. Civil society is simply not a priority now. We need to focus on how to save the Palestinian Authority.”</p>	<p>Civil society is just as critical to stability, security and peace as the PA and the private sector. All three sectors should be strong and independent. Further, if the PA either collapses or is dissolved, civil society will need to play an even greater role in the maintenance and development of Palestinian society. Strengthening civil society should therefore be an equally high priority.</p>
<p>“Aid cannot be set aside for the future when the current humanitarian situation is so urgent. Money is needed today for food, shelter, health care, and salaries. Diverting funds to a permanent endowment where it would earn interest but the principle would not be spent would result in further, unnecessary suffering.”</p>	<p>Absolutely no emergency or humanitarian aid should be diverted, neither should any money budgeted for services provided by either the PA or NGOs. Also, Dalia must balance endowment building (a long-term goal) with immediate grantmaking so as to be responsive to the immediate needs of the Palestinian people.</p>
<p>“Donors will never agree to any local Palestinian control over funds or decision-making because they want to be able to direct funds according to their own foreign policy objectives.”</p>	<p>Globally, the international aid movement is emphasizing local leadership, sustainability, and harmonization with local agendas. Donors to Palestinians claim the same values, but say there is no mechanism through which to further these aims, especially given the protracted crisis. Dalia may be a valuable mechanism for donors to do what they say they want to do. Locally controlled community foundations are multiplying in the CIS, Asia, Africa, and elsewhere. These successes can help donors feel more comfortable sharing control with local beneficiaries. If necessary, donor-advised giving can allow donors to direct funds to their sectoral interests. Ultimately, if international donors won’t support our community foundation, we will rely only on local and Diaspora resources.</p>
<p>“Donors do not trust Palestinians to be responsible with money. They won’t trust a local initiative.”</p>	<p>In fact, some donors prefer local initiatives. Also, safeguards can be put into place to ensure fiscal responsibility. All finances and decisions should be transparent and publicized in newspapers</p>

	and on the internet. Donors can get the guarantees they need without undermining local control.
“Palestinians just don’t have the capacity to run a community foundation yet. They aren’t ready.”	There are plenty of highly capable Palestinians to professionally develop such an initiative. There is overwhelming evidence to counter this challenge.
“Too many elite Palestinians benefit from the current international aid system. They like their role as gatekeepers. These elites will never allow a democratization of the decision-making process over the use of civil society funds.”	While some powerful people may try to block (or more likely, to control) such an initiative, clear governance structures will allow everyone to influence the community foundation through a democratically elected board and open committees, at the same time preventing any one person or group to control it or exclude others.
“There is no need for a new foundation, the World Bank already administers a trust fund for Palestinian NGOs which has been tremendously successful and is overseen by a Palestinian supervisory board.	The World Bank PNGO project (now the NGO Development Centre) is not a permanent endowment. It is spent down and replenished at the discretion of international donors. Therefore, it does not decrease dependence on international aid. However, there are many lessons from the PNGO project that should inform this new initiative.
“The Welfare Association has a permanent endowment, and it is run by Palestinians. Why have another one?”	The Welfare Association is an important Palestinian grantmaking organization. A community foundation will not compete with the Welfare Association, but will contribute to broadening the range of funding options for civil society activities.
“The PA has an adversarial relationship with NGOs. They won’t allow an idea that will strengthen civil society.”	There is no reason why the PA and civil society should compete; they have different and complementary roles to play in Palestinian society. However, if for some reason the PA does not like the idea of a community foundation, their lack of endorsement ought not affect implementation as the PA does not and should not control civil society.
“Palestinian NGOs have become so irrelevant that they are not worth funding anyway. Providing more funds to them through a community foundation will just lead to more waste of much-needed resources.”	The objective of a community foundation is not to provide more money for NGOs, but to shift control over funds to a diverse, democratic, revolving group of grassroots representatives. Making NGOs and other grantees answer to a local, representative body will pressure them to increase their relevance. Moreover, within legal limits, the community foundation could fund all kinds of innovative civil society activity,

<p>“Palestinians are not able to work together across political affiliations, geographic regions, sectors, religions, genders, etc. A community foundation—especially with an endowment—will be subject to a power struggle and ultimately taken over by one group for its own benefit.”</p>	<p>not just existing NGOs. There are models of cross-factional cooperation among Palestinians that can be built upon. Anyway, similar power struggles take place in community foundations in the US and UK; they can be mitigated through well-conceived participatory governance structures and practices. If there is self-interest in working together, there will be enough people willing to do so.</p>
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Palestinians’ future in Israel and the occupied territory is unclear. What is clear is that civil society (defined broadly to include NGOs, but also CBOs, educational organizations, unions, movements, individual activists and intellectuals, and others) will play an important role in building a healthy and dignified Palestinian society, and to furthering efforts to ensure broad participation, equality, and social justice. Therefore, a community-based initiative to ensure sustainable resources for these indigenous, hopeful, strategic activities is itself an act of Palestinian nation-building.

IX. Conclusion

For over a decade, Palestinians in the occupied territory were the largest per capita recipients of international aid, but despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent, “development” did not result. In fact, governmental donors’ well-funded agendas nearly suffocated indigenous efforts. Many Palestinian NGOs became accountable to donors and alienated from the grassroots. Volunteerism, once vibrant, gave way to passivity as millions of people have come to rely on food aid, free shelter, and handouts. Then, after the Hamas victory in the January 2006 elections, nearly all international development aid was cut and only partially redirected to emergency relief. Palestinians in the occupied territory are plummeting deeper into poverty and vulnerability to violence. Meanwhile, the Palestinians in Israel continue to struggle to find a place for themselves as non-Jews in a self-proclaimed Jewish state. Made invisible by the Oslo framework, they are denied access to most international aid as donors consider Israel to be an industrialized democracy and therefore ineligible.

Obviously, the 59-year long conflict with Israel is the source of the problem, but rather than offering real political solutions, the international aid system exacerbates hopelessness and helplessness by objectifying beneficiaries and making them feel like beggars. Palestinians’ lack of control over nearly all aspects of their lives contradicts all enabling factors for health, democracy, sustainable development and non-violent social change.

We believe that after generations of conflict, dispossession, fragmentation and dehumanization, Palestinians need and deserve a structural intervention, not more bandages. Dalia will mobilize the abundant resources of the worldwide Palestinian community—steadfastness, traditions, creativity, faith, expertise & money and direct them to the best Palestinian-led social change & sustainable development initiatives. Dalia will sustain these activities by building a permanent endowment to produce income, thus reducing vulnerability to the negative effects of dependence on international aid. Dalia is not just another donor in the mix, because resources that Dalia mobilizes won’t belong to Dalia but to current and future generations of Palestinians—Dalia is merely a trustee.

The international community has an integral role to play in our effort to build Dalia, the first Palestinian community foundation. The international community must—finally—hold Israel accountable for respecting international law and hold themselves accountable to international standards of development practice, thus reversing the unintended negative consequences of dependence on international aid and opening new pathways for change and development. Dalia looks forward to developing serious, long-term, mutually-supportive partnerships with international organizations and individuals that respect our values, and at the same time, reaching out to all sectors of Palestinian society to make new connections that advance our collective aspirations.

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Annex A: Biographies of Members of Dalia's Founding Board of Directors

Juliette Abu-Iyun, a resident of Jaffa, has a Master's Degree in Legal Studies from Aix-en-Provence, and has been a member of the Israeli Bar since 1996. She has expertise in human rights, international law and international humanitarian law; and a specialization in refugee issues. Juliette currently works as a consultant to NGOs and multilateral agencies, including UNRWA. She has extensive experience planning and leading innovative research, advocacy and other politically-sensitive interventions in Palestine, Israel, Brussels, France and the United States. She worked as a researcher for Human Rights Watch in New York and Brussels and in Brussels for the Center for European Policy Studies. She completed a one year fellowship for professional training in community organizing and social change in Chicago and NY. Recently Juliette ran a two-year IDRC-funded participatory research project with refugees in Jalazon Camp, which she describes in the September 2006 issue of Forced Migration Review. She is fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, French and English.

Hamada Abed H. Al-Bayari is humanitarian affairs assistant for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Gaza Strip. He was previously involved with development and public relations at El-Wafa Medical Rehabilitation Hospital and did field research and coordination for B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Civic Forum Institute, and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. He has worked as a physiotherapy assistant and Arabic interpreter/translator for the French media. Hamada has a BSc from the Islamic University in Gaza City.

Sam Bahour is a Palestinian-American businessman and activist based in Al-Bireh/Ramallah. He is Managing Partner of Applied Information Management, a management consulting firm specializing in business development and with a niche focus on the information technology sector. Sam was instrumental in the establishment of PALTEL and the PLAZA Shopping Center and currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees at Birzeit University in the role of treasurer. He is also a Director at the Arab Islamic Bank. Sam writes frequently on Palestinian affairs and has been widely published. He is co-editor of Homeland: Oral History of Palestine and Palestinians.

Davina Gateley, originally from Switzerland, has volunteered for Palestinian NGOs and grassroots organizations for the last 3 years, while conducting her own research on the Palestinians in Israel. Currently, she works in a Palestinian community-based organization in Haifa and volunteers for Dalia Association. She holds a M.Sc. in Global Politics from the University of London, with her thesis focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict, and a B.A. in History & Social Sciences from Manchester University, UK. Davina worked in London in human rights organizations and charities, focusing on children's (NSPCC) and women's rights (Marie Stopes), refugees (Refugee Council); and asylum seekers (Matrix Chambers). She has been active in student politics and volunteered in the community with deprived youth and children with special needs.

Hiba I. Hussein, managing partner of the law firm Hussein and Hussein in Ramallah, is a senior attorney with extensive experience in the practice of corporate law and business-related legal development in Palestine. She has provided strategy advice and legal drafting services to various agencies of the Palestinian Authority and local and foreign businesses. She served as the Vice Chairman of the Palestine Securities Exchange from 1998 to May 2005 and as legal advisor to the Palestinian Negotiations Team in the Oslo, Stockholm and

Camp David processes. Hiba is the Chairman of Al-Mustakbal Foundation, the first think tank in Palestine to deal with public-private sector issues and policy formulation and advocacy work. She serves on the Board of Trustees of both Al-Najah University and the Palestine Consultancy Group and on the boards of the Palestinian Historical Sites Association, International Water Academy, International Water Association, Palestinian Hydrology Group, Pyalara (Youth Outreach), Almamal Art Foundation, and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Palestinian-American Research Center. Hiba holds a Juris Doctorate in law from Georgetown University, an MSc in Corporate Finance from the University of Sorbonne, an MA in International Relations from George Washington University and a BA in Political Science from the University of Tennessee. She has lectured and written widely on economic and commercial law reform, telecommunications policies, corporate governance, rule of law, and water/environmental issues in Palestine. Hiba practiced law in the US before returning to Palestine and maintains her US license. She is also licensed as a legal translator and arbitrator.

Basel Mansour, a resident of Biddu village in the West Bank, has worked for various NGOs doing community development and research. Recently, Basel led field research in the villages and refugee camps in the Nablus area for an AusAid project and ran a capacity building project for a youth center in al-Amari refugee camp funded by the EU. He is a graduate in Economics from Birzeit University and is earning an M.A. in International Cooperation and Economic integration in Italy. Basel is a founding member and chairman of a Nawafeth Youth Forum.

Nora Lester Murad, originally from the US, is an independent researcher/consultant living in East Jerusalem. She works with Palestinian NGOs, INGOs, and multilateral organizations doing participatory research, strategic planning, community development, organizational change, donor communications, CBO capacity assessments, impact evaluations, fundraising, and other projects. Her research interests include issues of dependence on international aid, participatory processes, and patriarchy. Nora has a PhD from Fielding Graduate Institute focused on social change and structural inequality; an MA in Intercultural Relations from Lesley University, with an emphasis in conflict management and training; and a BA in Middle East Studies from UCLA during which she studied at the American University in Cairo (1983-4) and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1984-5). Before moving to Palestine, she was assistant professor of cross-cultural understanding at Bentley College in Massachusetts, and she had a thriving organizational consulting practice serving community groups, hospitals, grant-makers, government agencies and corporations. During the first *Intifada*, she was the US coordinator of the Cambridge-Ramallah/El-Bireh Sister City Campaign.

Issam Nassar is assistant professor of history at Illinois State University specializing in the cultural history of the Middle East. He is also a researcher at the Institute of Jerusalem Studies in Jerusalem where he is associate editor of *Jerusalem Quarterly* (Arabic: Hawliyat al-Quds). He was Visiting Professor at the University of California at Berkeley in 2006. Born in Ramallah, Palestine, he completed his B.A. at Birzeit University, his M.A. at University of Cincinnati, and his doctorate at Illinois State University. His publications include: "European Portrayals of Jerusalem: Religious Fascinations and Colonialist Imaginations" (2006); "Different Snapshots: Early Photography in Palestine: 1850-1948" (in Arabic, 2005); and "Photographing Jerusalem" (1997). He is the co-editor of several books including: *Pilgrims, Lepers and Stuffed Cabbage: Essays on Jerusalem's Cultural History* (2005); *Ottoman*

Jerusalem in the Jawharieh Memoirs: Volume One of the Memoirs of the Musician Wasif Jawharieh, 1904-1917 (2003).

Ghada Rabah is manager of Palestine's Right to Play program based in Ramallah. She was the project manager for the Women's Legal Aid and Counseling Center and was a human rights field researcher for Al-Haq and Save the Children. She was childhood program officer and middle area program officer at the Welfare Association, and was the grants consultant for the Canada Fund. Ms Rabah worked at American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) doing monitoring and evaluation as well as serving as coordinating special education, training, and women's development. Ghada earned her B.A. in sociology at Birzeit University and holds a certificate in governance and civil society from University of the Middle East, Boston. She attended a course in women's rural development at Reading University, UK. She has extensive experience with community issues, and has volunteered in grassroots community organizations focusing on rehabilitation, culture, women, youth, children and other social service activities. She was also a founding member of the Palestinian Counseling Center, Community Development Association for the Hearing Impaired, Women's Loan Fund, El-Urmawi Cultural Group, and other important community organizations.

Mohammad A. M. Shaheen is the Dean of Public Health and Director of the Center for Development in Primary Health Care at Al-Quds University, where he has taught various subjects for over 20 years. He has a PhD in Health Services Administration with a focus on health economics and policy research from the University of Pittsburgh, a Masters in Community Health from Purdue University and a BSc in Medical and Nursing Sciences from the University of Jordan. Mohammad is a pioneer in advocating for community partnership in development and community participation models in public health. Also, he is a founding member of the Palestinian Health Policy Forum that advocates for policies responsive to the needs of the Palestinian people. He is a long-time board member and current vice president of Childwatch International. Mohammad has extensive experience doing collaborative research with researchers around the world and has led or contributed to scores of evaluation, capacity building projects, and developmental interventions with multilateral agencies, INGOs, and NGOs.

Trees Zbidat-Kosterman has worked for nearly 10 years as the resource development and public relations officer at Al Zahraa Arab Women Organization in Sakhnin, a Palestinian village in northern Israel. In her native country, Holland, she worked as a social worker in a shelter for abused women specializing with Moroccan and Turkish immigrants and with immigrant youth and political asylum seekers. Trees is a member of the Advisory Council of the Global Fund for Women in San Francisco. She won an award for her case study about the situation of Palestinian women inside Israel, which she presented at the Awid Conference in Bangkok in 2005. Recently, she awarded an international fellowship for 2007 by the Ford Motor Company.